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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report from a symposium conducted by the International Reading Association Commission on High Quality Teacher Education on the topic, "Improved Preparation for Reading Teachers for the Seventies." The report discusses a number of ways to develop a model or models for improving the undergraduate and graduate teaching of reading teachers: individualized instruction, instructional modules, behavioral objectives, coalitions of related groups, summative and formative evaluation procedures, provisions for different competency levels, a continuum of experiences for preservice and inservice teachers, planning institutional reorganization, retraining college instructors, and using technology to improve programs. This study also recommends that special consideration be given to defining the developmental needs and characteristics of children, so that a curriculum can be planned with future teachers who will attend to these needs and characteristics. (Author/DI)

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REVIEW OF RECENTLY RECOMMENDED MODELS

Symposia: 1. Improved Preparation of Reading Teachers for the Seventies

In the last few years, model programs of teacher education have received increased attention. By examining several of these models, the IRA Commission on High Quality Teacher Education recognizes the need to systematically review and revise preparation programs for reading teachers in light of experiences gained in using current models, changes in society, and advances in the art of educating professional personnel.

Certain key questions guided the examination of new models:

(1) What conceptual strengths and weaknesses do they demonstrate? and

(2) What implications can be gleaned from them that will enable the Commission to draft a new model or models for the preparation of teachers of reading?

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To answer these questions, this paper will sketch briefly some salient features of ten models and then suggest considerations which may be applied to future programs. By its brevity, the report may appear to neglect or oversimplify certain features of the proposals from Columbia University Teachers College, Florida State University, University of Georgia, University of Massachusetts, Michigan State University, University of Wisconsin, University of Toledo, Syracuse University, University of Pittsburgh, and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. However, this brevity will, hopefully, not detract from the important contributions of the proposal designers.

Selected Features of Model Programs

Within the present context of rapid cultural change, all models are predicated upon the need for bold, innovative approaches to teacher education. Their direction is away from prescriptive, authoritarian, fragmented programs toward those that are open-ended, process-oriented, and integrated. Additionally, each model tries to utilize recent technological knowledge in the creation of an humanistic teacher education program.

A notable feature of the models is the attempt to individualize instruction for prospective teachers. In some, individualization will be achieved by means of variable pacing; in others, individualized courses of study and/or variable program entry and exit points will be utilized.

Variable pacing permits flexibility in accomodating a wide range of student differences. Within a designated four-year-course of study, for

example, one student may complete a program in two years while another may take five years to meet the same criteria.

Individualized courses of study offer students a number of alternatives for reaching certain objectives. That students should be involved in the direction and content of their education is recognized by trainees and their advisors when they jointly plan appropriate courses of study to meet individual interests, abilities, and experiences. In this process, the trainee can determine how he best acquires information, thereby adding to his understanding that children also acquire information in many different ways.

Variable entry points are employed in some programs to allow students with unusual proficiency to demonstrate their mastery of specific criteria. If criteria are met, trainees may undertake work in areas where their needs exist, thus freeing them from study in fields of established competency.

The break from structured courses to individualized instruction for prospective teachers can lead to efficiency in the use of faculty-student time and effort, to more student participation in formulating his purposes and program, and to unprecedented humanization of teacher education. Individualized practices will foster intellectual curiosity and scholastic achievement which may have been "turned off" by irrelevancies of past programs. Obviously, the counselor-student relationship is central to the success of individualized instruction.

Inasmuch as guidelines from the United States Office of Education indicated that program objectives should be stated in behavioral or performance terms, all models employed such terms to focus attention upon observable teacher behaviors. Specifically worded criteria tend to reduce the ambiguity that often characterized statements of desired outcomes of teaching and learning in the past. Performance-based objectives also tend to increase efficiency of learning, particularly in the mastery of skills and content, by clarifying what is expected of the learner, under what conditions the behavior is expected, and how the behavior will be evaluated.

The architects of these models developed performance criteria in three broad conceptual areas related to teaching: (1) content knowledge; (2) behavorial skills (the technical skills of teaching); and (3) human relations skills. With such criteria, teacher preparation becomes more closely identified with the primary concern of all educators--the total educational development of children and youth.

The design and implementation of these models requires input from several disciplines working together in new ways. In a serious attempt to provide an extensive and integrated education, the originators of the elementary school teacher education models advocate programs which are developed by an interdisciplinary team of specialists in allied fields. Through involvement of areas other than education, courses in foundations and methods will result in content that is more relevant to the needs of public schools. Where unanimity of goals is achieved, trainees will

receive a well-balanced curriculum in several fields of knowledge and learning necessary for successful teaching. They will also acquire affective skills that contribute to their development as perceptive, educated individuals.

Most models recognize that a complex of interdependent organizational systems impinges upon teacher education programs. They call for greater continuity between training experience and actual professional experience through collaboration with surrounding school districts, neighborhood organizations, social agencies, industry, and state and federal offices of education. Coalitions between teacher training institutions and other concerned groups appear requisite in any program which tries to bridge the gap between the academic and practical world.

What has been designated as "curricular rigor mortis" is being overcome by fresh approaches to thinking about curriculum organization and content. Traditionally, the basic curriculum unit for teacher education has been the course. Although some of the ten models retain a course organization with improvements, most of them rely on the instructional module as a means of providing flexibility and individualization within the curriculum. A module, defined as a planned episode ranging in duration from a minimum of several hours to a maximum of several months, is organized around a single objective. Often a pretest determines the student's readiness to attempt a module. If a student passes the pretest, he may be permitted to move on to more advanced concepts.

Each module specifies an instructional objective and criterion measurements, with knowledge and experiences for attaining a goal being carefully described. The module may suggest self-directed work or attendance at a lecture, interaction with groups of college peers, actual work with children, or various combinations of these and other activities. Techniques such as computer-assisted instruction, sensitivity training, microteaching, or simulation may be employed in the module.

With regard to experiences with children, each model seeks to organize the trainee's work in the teaching-learning situation from simple to complex, so that developing skills can be evaluated as the trainee grows in his role as a teacher. More experiences with children in different settings throughout the collegiate program are encouraged, along with observations and student teaching at several academic levels.

A major assumption of some models is that schools can no longer justify the isolation of preservice from inservice teacher education. In the 1960's and now in the 1970's, rapid social changes require constant, relevant, inservice programs for teachers. Increasingly, new models of teacher education will embody differentiated staffing patterns which illustrate a continuum of experiences from undergraduate through on-the-job training. These models will provide for varying levels of responsibility or professional competency--paraprofessional, professional, and specialist; specific areas of specialization; careful initial and followup placement of teacher candidates; and a system of strategies to support the program. Continuous learning and professional development will replace

compartmentalized preservice and inservice experiences by a model which reflects the professional growth of educators from their decision to enter teaching until their retirement from the profession. Not only should this process produce more effective teachers, but it should also encourage research into alternative approaches to inservice education.

The preservice-inservice continuum implies that a new relationship will occur between institution and teacher. The teacher will remain in frequent contact with the college, giving helpful data which may lead to improved programs, while at the same time receiving information from the college to update his teaching performance. The latter will be facilitated by two interrelated processes: (1) diagnosis and prescription according to individual teacher needs and (2) appraisal of teaching growth to determine career advancement within a differentiated staffing structure.

More so than in previous decades, institutions are conducting clearly defined evaluations of the teachers they prepare. Feedback on preparation by current and former students invariably leads to penetrating comments. Their suggestions concerning all aspects of their professional training can prove valuable. To follow their graduates into practice, college administrators are assigning higher priority to teacher education and providing necessary financial resources.

Considerations for the Preparation of Reading Personnel

A major task of college reading professors is the preparation of young men and women to be good teachers. Most members of this group are convinced

that improved teacher-education programs are possible and that innovations of a decade or two ago are no longer the most appropriate vehicles for the 1970's; they are equally convinced that piecemeal modifications of existing structures are not likely to produce desired results.

In many cases, viable programs of the future will necessitate drastic reorganization of the internal structure of Schools of Education. At present, many departments in these schools are virtually autonomous. Innovative practices in the preparation of teachers of reading will require much closer collaboration with other departments, as well as within the department in which reading is located. In all probability, a fairly complete restructuring of departmental organization and operation will be needed. It is also essential that Schools of Education lose their insularity by eliminating the barriers between campus and non-campus. The improvement of teacher preparation in reading is dependent upon the extent to which these changes can be accomplished.

A review of the models for teacher education focuses attention on several other considerations. In the first place, it is not known with certainty what form the future world and its societies will take, nor is it possible to predict how children should be educated to live and work in those societies. Consequently, teachers must learn to be resourceful individuals, adapting themselves readily to changes in society as well as in their roles as teachers.

The development of self-renewing teachers can be accomplished only by self-renewing educators. Needed now, perhaps more than ever before, are

model programs for the regeneration of college professors to enable them to gain expertise in assisting professional fledglings in the resolution of critical problems that will confront them. Furthermore, proposed new programs for teacher education will require major departures from present practices on the part of university faculties. These programs cannot be implemented without staff retraining.

As part of the regenerative process, the teacher of teachers must strive consciously to acquire new content usable by classroom teachers. Some educators believe this goal can best be achieved when college faculties periodically engage in the instruction of children. Others recommend that professors move into new roles as on-call resource consultants in public school systems. Regardless of the route taken, these experiences may make it possible for professors to devise instructional behaviors that will reduce, if not eliminate, obstacles to pupil learning. They should also be able to attack intelligently teachers' perennial problems of pupil motivation, pupil achievement, and classroom organization. Moreover, they will be in better positions to remove artificiality from teacher preparation programs. Until then, it appears relatively futile to expect to bridge the intellectual-psychological-status gulf between teacher educators and practitioners.

Although the objectives of all proposals were couched in behavioral terms, two documents acknowledged that not all significant teaching behaviors can be specified accordingly. When aesthetic or affective outcomes are valued products of learning, it may not be possible to predetermine the <u>quality</u> of the experience to the extent that it might be in the case of

skills mastery. At present it appears that performance criteria are inappropriate for certain aspects of the teaching-learning process.

Granted that individualization of student programs of study is desirable, the procedure of completely individualizing teacher preparation should be undertaken with caution. In some instances asking trainees what they would like to learn is tantamount to giving them freedom not to think, not to experience, and not to take part in what may be worthwhile activities. It is also possible that assuming that young adults will always know what they need to learn prior to any participation in communities, schools, and professional roles could be a case of expectation over experience.

Conventional "reading methods" courses taught in a college classroom from a prepared syllabus on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday by a specialist undoubtedly will yield to a curriculum-problems and issue-oriented program of study pursued cooperatively by students and professors. Attempts will be made to unlock present curriculum structure by replacing class work with instructional modules. When these modules are considered tentative, rather than rigid requirements, and when they offer a rich variety of experiences and materials, they should permit a flexibility in designing individual programs heretofore unknown. Students should then have opportunities to assess each module's effectiveness as they complete that component of the program.

Some nonstructural alternatives should be provided, perhaps not for all students but at least for those who elect them.. Eventually, it may be advantageous to allow students to write their own personal development plans

so that those who prefer a structured sequential learning program may opt for it, while others could create a program more suited to their needs and interests.

What is meant by "individualizing the curriculum?" Most models view individualization as charting individual paths to predetermined goals. Individualization can be conceived more broadly. It can emerge from membership in a community; the trip to good teaching need not be made alone. Together teachers can learn new ways of living and teaching in professional schools, in workshops, in community involvement, as well as through independent programs. Training for occupational socialization can take place through belonging to a reference group and through reality training by the use of simulation experiences and role playing.

Concluding Statements

New ways of developing teachers are demanded by current school problems and by the mood of the public. Colleges must make distinct commitments to innovation, demonstrating their willingness to break conventional patterns by testing new ways of learning and teaching.

In designing a new model or models for the preparation of reading personnel, the IRA Commission on High Quality Teacher Education will do well to eliminate past criticisms of undergraduate and graduate education programs by incorporating features of the models reviewed above: individualization of instruction; instructional modules; behavioral objectives in areas where they are appropriate; coalitions of related groups; summative and formative evaluation procedures; provisions for different competency levels;

continuum of experiences for preservice and inservice teachers; planning for institutional reorganization; retraining college instructors; and using technological knowledge for the improvement of programs. Because some newer models of teacher preparation devote limited attention to child development, an IRA model or models should give special consideration to the definition of developmental needs and characteristics of children. It then becomes appropriate to plan a curriculum with future teachers that will facilitate the growth of children by attending to their needs and characteristics.